5:Slaski E-4 (no date) 1950 FQ5 Bemba FQ5



# THE LUAPULA PEOPLES

## INTRODUCTION

114 Published data on the peoples of the Luapula Valley, the most important of whom are the Lunda of Chief Kazembe, are extremely meagre. They consist mostly of casual information scattered through the pages of travellers', officials' and missionaries' books. It would have been impossible to make any ordered survey on the basis of these data. Fortunately, however, Mr. I. G. Cunnison, Research Officer of the Rhodes-Livingstone Institute, was in England for a few months after completing his first year's researches in the region, and was kind enough to make available his rough manuscript on certain topics as well as information embodied in lectures he gave at Oxford. Without these it would have been impossible for this part of the survey to have been written at all. As no full, considered analysis of his material has yet been made by Mr. Cunnison, he has no responsibility for my interpretations in any part of this survey.

## GROUPING AND DEMOGRAPHY

101 563 The Lower Luapula valley is inhabited by groups of diverse tribal origins. Those on the east bank of the river in Northern Rhodesia are known to their neighbours as *Bena Kazembe* (the people of Kazembe) and are often collectively described as "Kazembe's Lunda". The conquering Lunda (also known as *Londa, Alunda, Varunda, Aronda, Alonda, Balonda*),(1) were probably never numerically preponderant, but they established themselves as a governing class and still retain to some extent their former prestige and political ascendancy. The west bank of the Luapula, which lies in the Belgian Congo, has passed under the dominance of the Nkuba of the royal Shila (also known as *Kasiro, Mesiro*) line. This ruling group of the matrilineal Shila, congeners of the Bemba,(2) had earlier controlled territory on the east bank but were subdued by the invading Lunda before the middle of the eighteenth century.

131 The kingdom of the Lunda Kazembe thus consists of an elongated strip of country stretching almost due north-south for about one hundred miles, along the meridian 28° 45' between 9° and 11° lat. S. To the west it is bounded by the Luapula, and to the east by the uninhabited hills of the escarpment beyond which lies the tribal territory of the Chiahinga. Beginning about thirty miles south of the Luongo, a tributary of the Luapula, it extends northwards to Lake Mweru and twenty miles up its east shore to the Mwateshi stream, including Sokwe island on Lake Mweru.

The limits of the modern Nkuba kingdom to the west of the river can be indicated with less certainty as running from Lake Mweru in the north through the Kundelungu mountains and thence to the river about the same latitude as the southern limit of the kingdom of Kazembe.

The valley forms a natural ecological and economic unit orientated

(1) Burton, 1873, p.36. (2) See p.1.

7:Richards E-5 (1930-1934)1940 FQ5 Bemba FQ5



since the break-up of the whole settlement may become inevitable in such circumstances.

There are no other organized bodies of Europeans in this area —no big bodies of farmers or settlers, for instance. But it may be said that all Europeans are in a sense in a position of authority. They all have the sanction of wealth and the power of employing a following. All have the high social status that enables them to talk to a chief as an equal, or more usually as an inferior, and all are believed by the natives to be backed, whether right or wrong, by the administrative officers of the district however unjustifiably.

Besides these new authorities introduced into the political arena, the power of the Bemba chief is inevitably reduced by his economic position, which must have grown increasingly bad since the first days of European occupation. The Bemba rulers were never rich compared to a number of African potentates. Theirs is a poor country. They possess no cattle which could be converted to money under modern conditions; the ivory of their country no longer belongs to them, nor their mineral rights. Land has no financial value as yet, and the salaries given to chiefs have always been low compared to the income, say, of the paramount chief of the Barotse.[1] Added to this, the service on which the Bemba chiefs depended is cut down by half or more by the absence of men at the mines, and what remains is often given unwillingly. These chiefs never apparently exacted court fines as a regular thing, after the fashion of the cattle-owning Bantu, and have not yet put a levy on the earnings of men away at the mines, as has been done in some parts of South Africa.

In view of these facts, it may be asked how the power of the *Bena ŋandu* survived at all up till 1929, when a determined effort was made to restore it. Partly because of their closely knit kinship structure, but also, I think, because of the strength of the supernatural beliefs on which their authority was so largely based. These were certainly weakened by the introduction of Christianity and the prevention or discouragement of many tribal rites, but it is impossible to treat them as mere survivals at the present day. Even young men are affected by such beliefs. For much the same reasons, the chiefs' courts continued to function alongside of the

[1] The Barotse chief receives an annual subsidy of £1,700, together with £850 from the British South Africa Company and £1,500 from the Zambesi saw-mills, as compared to the £60 a year of the Bemba paramount.